

P-20 Council Early Childhood Committee Recommendations

November 13, 2008

Over the summer, the P-20 Council established an Early Childhood Ad Hoc Committee and tasked it with making recommendations on how best to integrate early childhood efforts into the work of the P-20 Council. These recommendations build on the work that came out of a meeting hosted in May by the Kellogg Foundation and Education Commission of the States which brought together members of the P-20 Council, First Things First and key community stakeholders around aligning birth to five with the early elementary years. The resulting recommendations were designed with the following three criteria in mind, in order to prevent duplication of efforts already underway:

1. An issue or policy problem that can more effectively be advanced if K-12 and higher education are included in the conversation.
2. An issue or policy problem that can use P-20's political muscle to advance more quickly or successfully.
3. A recommendation that is specifically involves implementation at the K-12 or higher education level.

Communications Committee

Principle Statement:

When talking about the "P" in P-20, we must use terms which represent the full spectrum of birth to five. "Early learning," in particular, honors the fact that children are born learning and clearly illustrates that the early years lay the foundation for all the intellectual development that is to come.

Recommendations:

- The "P" in P-20 represents the first five years of life and all the learning that takes place during these critical years.
- In order to communicate the full spectrum of education and provide the public with a better understanding educational alignment, the P-20 Council should adopt a tagline such as "Supporting Arizona's young people from birth to career."
- The Expect More Arizona campaign should be multilingual and culturally reflective of Arizona's diverse population.
- The Expect More Arizona campaign's calls to action must be coordinated in order to be effective. Potential calls to action related to early learning should be coordinated through First Things First and vetted through the P-20 Communications committee. A protocol for this process needs to be developed.
- Targeted messaging raising the value of early childhood education is necessary to recruit new early childhood teachers.



Literacy Committee

Principle Statement:

Emergent literacy begins at birth, and includes the development of oral and written language skills as well as reading. Young children have their first literary experiences at home, making family literacy efforts a critical component of strong literacy skills. Family literacy efforts must be sensitive to the rich and varied cultures of Arizona families. Because young brains are so receptive to language acquisition, early childhood is a prime opportunity to expose children to multiple languages.

Recommendations:

- Expand and enhance existing family and caregiver literacy efforts such as the Parent Kits, Reading is Fundamental and Reach Out and Read.



- Assess family literacy resources in communities across Arizona. Public libraries could be a strong partner in this effort.
- To support struggling readers, K-12 reading instruction must target families and not just students.

Data Committee

Principle Statement:

Data collection in the early childhood system has been sporadic. Issues of privacy and the decentralized nature of the system are barriers to regular data collection. There is substantial need for a longitudinal data warehouse to securely manage accurate, meaningful data on quality of early care and education, health, professional development, and family support for children birth to age five and their families. This warehouse is being developed by First Things First.

Recommendations:

- Support agencies and/or organizations collecting early childhood data in sharing child and family level data with the data warehouse.
- Support kindergarten teacher access to valuable preschool assessment data and First Things First access to K-12 assessment data by ensuring that mechanisms of data transfer and data sharing between First Things First and K-12 data systems are finalized. This data-sharing facilitates a smooth transition into kindergarten for children.

Teachers Committee

Principle Statement:

Early childhood teacher quality is one of the strongest indicators of positive outcomes for young children, but the field is generally poorly educated and poorly compensated, leading to mediocre environments for children and high rates of teacher turnover. Research shows that teachers with a college degree are better at assessing the needs of individual children and create learning environments that are more positive and responsive than teachers without a college degree, and that children whose teachers have had more education are more likely to perform better on cognitive and language assessments. But many barriers to higher education exist for this population, many of whom find themselves as “accidental students” who are well into their careers before starting or returning to school.

Recommendations:

- Higher education must be affordable and accessible to those already working in the early learning field—this includes access to financial aid, the ability to find courses in both urban and rural areas, flexible course offerings that accommodate the schedules of working adults, and the ability to take leave from one’s current job to student teach.
- Develop and implement an agreed-upon set of core knowledge and competencies across early childhood teacher education programs.
- Develop articulation agreements among community colleges and between community colleges and universities to create a seamless environment for students.
- Support public school preschool and kindergarten teachers in achieving Early Childhood Certification or Endorsement by July 1, 2012 by increasing the capacity of higher education and developing a phased in plan with interim milestones to track progress. In order to create incentives for teachers to move quickly, include triggers for increased compensation once Certification or Endorsement is achieved.
- Support first, second and third grade teachers to work towards the Early Childhood Teacher Certification or Endorsement to enhance their understanding of early childhood development. Encourage principals and other administrators to also increase their knowledge of early childhood development.



Glossary:

Early Childhood Certification/Endorsement

The Department of Education offers an Early Childhood Certification or Endorsement for teachers who work with preschool and kindergarten children in public schools to increase their knowledge of early childhood development. This Certification or Endorsement is recommended but not required for 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade teachers.

Pathways Committee

Principle Statement:

Before arriving in kindergarten, Arizona children spend their days in a wide variety of settings, from Head Start to private child care to being cared for by mom, dad or by a neighbor down the street. For this reason, children arrive to kindergarten with very different levels of readiness. In addition to supporting school readiness, regardless of pathway, we must look at what schools can do to be ready to meet a child's needs regardless of his or her readiness to start school.



The transition from early learning into the formal school system is a process, not a one day event. The early childhood and K-12 systems must collaborate to promote ready kids, ready schools, and successful P-3 transitions.

Recommendations:

- With the support of the Kellogg Foundation and Education Commission of the States, convene a team representing early childhood and K-12 to identify the components of successful P-3 transition in Arizona. This team should also recommend implementation steps, taking advantage of best practices identified through existing state and national pilot projects. Examples of such findings include:

- ◇ Engaging schools and districts with local early childhood providers to strengthen relationships and pathways.
- ◇ Encouraging teachers at different grade levels to communicate regarding their needs and expectations.
- ◇ Providing parents with the opportunity to meet kindergarten teachers prior to the start of the school year
- ◇ Balancing academic expectations with principles of child development.

Glossary:

Child Care Licensing Standards

The Department of Health Services and Department of Economic Security ensure that all licensed child care centers and homes meet basic health and safety standards. Home-based providers who care for fewer than four children for compensation are not required to be licensed or certified.

- Support increased quality and excellence through enhanced child care licensing standards and efforts to encourage unregulated child care homes to become licensed.
- As revenues become available, endorse a multiyear solution that will gradually increase state child care subsidy rates to the current year and index rates so they remain current in years to come.

Glossary:

Child Care Subsidy

The Department of Economic Security provides subsidies to eligible low-income working parents so that they can afford child care for their children while they work. In spite of a 5% increase in 2007, subsidy rates remain well below the market rate charged by early education providers.

Alignment and Assessment Committee

Principle Statement:

Early childhood assessment should be formative, not summative, and should be used as a teaching tool to inform teachers and families rather than a tool to label children. Early learning standards should be developmentally appropriate and aligned with standards throughout the education spectrum.

Recommendations:

- When available, school districts should seek out valuable preschool assessment data on their incoming kindergarten students.
- Support the use of early childhood standards in all early childhood settings.
- Add social-emotional domains to kindergarten standards to increase alignment between preschool and kindergarten.
- Encourage districts to direct current Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) funds toward preschool.
- Support the expansion of ECBG with new funds targeted to preschool programs.

Glossary:

Early Childhood Block Grant

State dollars used to support the enrollment of economically disadvantaged children in high quality preschool programs and to promote student achievement in K-3 programs.

P-20 Early Childhood Ad Hoc Committee Membership

Chair: Rhian Evans-Allvin – First Things First and P-20 Council

Valerie Andrews-James – Arizona Dept. of Education
Amanda Burke – Arizona State University
Amy Corriveau – Arizona Department of Education
LaVonne Douville – United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona
Sally Downing – Arizona Dept. of Education
Cheryl Foster – P-20 Council
Marybeth Ginter – Pima Community College
Bonnie Groth – Arizona Head Start Association
Elliott Hibbs – First Things First
Ana Christina Iddings – University of Arizona
Irene Jacobs – Governor's Office for Children, Youth and Families
Janet Johnson – Rio Salado College
Naomi Karp – Early childhood consultant
Amy Kemp – First Things First
Mary Kyle – Mammoth- San Manuel School District
Sonya Montoya – Arizona Head Start Association

Mark Nagasawa – Arizona Dept. of Education
Christine Nowaczyk – Bank of Arizona and P-20 Council
Karen Ortiz – Helios Foundation
Pamela Powell – Northern Arizona University and First Things First
Ilana Reyes – University of Arizona
Eva Shivers – Indigo Cultural Center and Arizona Early Education Funds
Connie Shorr – Head Start Collaboration Office
Alicia Smith – First Things First
Jill Stevens – Children's Action Alliance
Elaine Surbeck – Arizona State University
Ginger Ward – Southwest Human Development
Susan Wilkins – Association for Supportive Child Care
Karen Woodhouse – First Things First

Questions? Contact Eva Lester in the Governor's Office for Children, Youth and Families at elester@az.gov